



Everyone knows that the single greatest tragedy of last season's baseball strike was the Montreal Expos. Never mind the fact that Matt Williams and Ken Griffey, Jr. were on track to have legitimate shots at Roger Maris's home run record or any of the other many wonderful things that were happening in one of baseball's most exciting campaigns ever. It was the Expos who suffered, because it had long been a foregone conclusion that their nucleus of underpriced talent was now having its final heyday, that the next season that nucleus would be a disparate bunch of overpriced talent on other teams. Thus, this was Montreal's last shot; their last real chance at a World Series until there is a change in fiscal policy within either the Expos or Major League Baseball itself. The latter of these is not likely to happen any time soon, and the former won't happen so long as the Expos' management—indeed, the whole city of Montreal—remains convinced that Montreal is a small market city.

First of all, as I argued last year, Montreal is not a small market city, but it is nevertheless true that that is the perception of the city in baseball circles. Given this unfortunate pseudo reality, it becomes necessary to deal with the city accordingly. The question is: what can be done about a small market city? This question is, of course, far larger than just Montreal. Football has its Green Bays, hockey its Winnipegs, and basketball its Sacramentos. It has become increasingly apparent that these cities can no longer hope to compete in the modern world of sports.

The Expos serve as a prime example of how to do everything right, but still remain a hand-to-mouth organisation without a real shot at a pennant. Last year the Expos demonstrated what can only be described as a miracle of good management. They had the second lowest payroll in Major League Baseball and still managed to ring up the best record of all the teams. The high priced Atlanta Braves were simply floundering behind them. Then came the strike. The Expos were unable to get the huge box offices that they had every right to expect of the best team in baseball during a pennant drive (not to mention playoff revenues); not because Montreal didn't support them, but because Montreal never got that opportunity.

It was partly because of this that the Expos were unable to resign such prominent names such as Ken Hill, Marquiss Grissom, Larry Walker, and John Wetteland. All four of these players are among baseball's elite, and it is impossible to think of a team that could survive their loss. And yet, for a time, that's exactly what the Expos did. For the first half of the season they stayed even with the Braves as the two teams chased down the Philadelphia Phillies in the NL East. Then, once Atlanta turned on the jets and left the Expos and Phillies in their wake, the Expos long remained a contender for the wildcard spot. Unfortunately, miracles only come so often and even then they don't last forever. Butch Henry went out with an injury, and then Moises Alou went down for the season. The Expos were done. The rest of the teams in the wildcard chase played almost as bad, torturing Expos fans with the hope that just one hot streak would see them in the playoffs. Sadly, however, it has come time to face the truth. This team, without Alou, is not a team capable of putting together a hot streak. In fact, a hot streak for this ball club as it currently stands would be .500. The truth, and this pains me greatly, is that the Expos are a bad team. To be crass, the Expos suck! ... but it's not their fault.

The fault resides in a completely mercenary system among baseball's team owners. The owners—along with misguided media and fans—complain mightily how the greed of the players is destroying the very fabric of the game. (I get the feeling that they would love to say the 'fabric of society' if they thought they could get away with it.) The owners have tried mightily to force the onus of competitive balance upon the shoulders of the players. This is not where it belongs. The players are employees, and should have the same rights as any other employees in any other industry. The current generation of labour problems stem from the owners' attempts to deny the players these rights. And the end result of these disputes is that the owners have allowed themselves to bid up player salaries to the point that the small market cities are no longer able to compete.

The sad thing about this is that it is so unnecessary. If Major League Baseball could simply realise that the only way they can continue as they are, without making a complete farce of the entire idea of competitive balance, is to make a significant effort to equalise revenues. This is why the NFL is able to keep a team in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The Green Bay Packers are able to compete against the Dallas Cowboys not simply because they share a mega TV deal, but also because they share things like souvenir incomes as well. Every dollar that is made off of Dallas Cowboy souvenirs goes into a pot which is divided up in equal shares to all NFL teams. As a result, the Green Bay Packers have at least some hope of competing on a level playing field.

This idea of shared revenues has been bandied about in baseball circles for many years, but as yet there seems to be little chance of it happening. Large market teams like the New York Yankees, or teams with super stations like the Braves and the Chicago Cubs, see no reason why they should give some of these revenues to the Seattle Mariners or the Montreal Expos. Their argument is sound if harsh; in a capitalist free market such as Canada and the United States, the teams which are unable to survive will have to perish. If that is the way it has to be then that is the way it has to be, but it is simply untrue that it is the players who are bringing the Expos to its knees. No, it is the owner's themselves who are forcing this tragedy.

Men's Soccer

Mangberg a welcome exchange

by Peter J. Cullen
Brunswickan Sports

Mattias Mangberg not only has a distinctive name, but he also has an impressive aptitude for soccer. Even before sitting in his first class at UNB, he had already scored one decisive goal and had also claimed Athlete of the Week honours.

Mangberg plays the midfield position on the men's soccer team, and has already made his presence known with the go-ahead goal in a 4-1 victory over UPEI two weeks ago. But Mangberg is not the standard student/player. Hailing from Härnösand, Sweden, the 23-year old Mangberg stands out with his stark blond hair and his European accent. His casual demeanour strikes a contrast to his play on the field.

Mangberg's arrival in Fredericton comes as part of a foreign exchange program. "At the university where I studied back in Sweden, we have an exchange with UNB," he explained. Mangberg considered the program and deemed it very interesting, simply saying, "I applied and I was selected." Mangberg had successfully completed two years of study at the University of Sweden prior to his arrival in Canada. He is currently enrolled in the faculty of Business and hopes to finish his degree upon his return to Sweden next year. "I'm only here until May. Just for a year," he added.

Living so far from home and adjusting to life in a new city has not phased Mangberg at all. "It's almost the same," he commented about Fredericton. "It's the same size as the town I was born in." Mangberg also speaks the language very well for someone who had never previously visited Canada. He explained that, "In Sweden, we start learning English in the third grade." The language issue has not been much of a hindrance for the Swede at all. "It is no problem

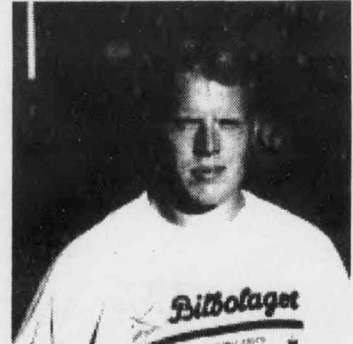
to read and understand, but I'm not used to a lot of speaking. But it's not a problem."

Mangberg has been practising and honing his soccer skills for as long as

he can remember. "It's the biggest sport in Sweden. And Europe, too, I think," he said. But for Mangberg it is not strictly competition; he thoroughly enjoys all aspects of the sport. "It's fun to do. You meet new people and it's just fun and good exercise," he said.

While commenting on the soccer team's prospects for the year and his Athlete of the Week award, Mangberg pointedly states that neither he nor any particular individual will rise above the others. "There are 11 guys playing. We're a team," he stressed.

Mangberg has enjoyed his short time in Fredericton and believes he will have a great year. "I like it so far," he said. "Fredericton is very nice." With his easygoing nature and his athletic ability, he should fit in nicely at UNB.

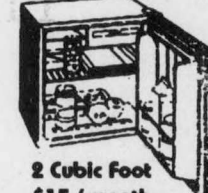


Mattias Mangberg
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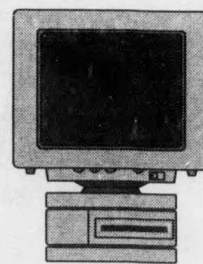
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